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United States Civil Service Commission
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Minutes of the Committee on Federal
Personnel Management Information Systems

December 14, 1977

The Committee Chair, Dr. Phil Schneider, opened the meeting by welcoming two new agencies as members of the Committee: Commodity Futures Trading Commission and ACTION. He also noted the name change to the Bureau of Personnel Management Information Systems (BPMIS).

The first agenda item was a status report on the development of a proposed Federal General Standard for Organization Designation. Mr. Charles J. Kenny, Chief of the CSC Data Standards Section, provided the background of this proposal and the interagency Memorandum of Understanding for its development signed by OMB, GAO, Treasury, NBS, DoD and CSC. Mr. Kenny noted that the proposal is under formal coordination and review as specified in FPM Supplement 292-1. An interagency Work Group, chaired by Ms. Wilda Berry, developed the proposal which was subsequently reviewed by the Data Standardization Subcommittee. The proposal will shortly begin a 90-day coordination cycle by the IAG Committee on FPMIS, CSC Bureau and Staff offices, and signatory agencies to the Memorandum of Understanding. Prior to this latter coordination, there will be a working review of agency comments received to date. Mr. Kenny invited all interested parties to attend this meeting in Room 1304 on January 4, 1978, at 1:30 p.m. (Note: the need for advance agency notice for this meeting has caused it to be rescheduled to January 20, 1978 -- same time and place). In response to a question, Dr. Schneider noted that the subsequent stages of coordination for this standard under FPM Supp. 292-1 will include the heads of agencies through the FIPS Points of Contact.

Mr. Kenny also briefly discussed the status of proposed Federal Program Standards for Education and Training data elements. These elements will go to the IAG Committee on FPMIS for formal review following revisions to accommodate agency-suggested additions.

The Chair then introduced Ronald Leahy, Assistant Director of the CSC Office of Labor-Management Relations, who briefly described planned changes to the SF 1187 and 1188 for union dues withholding action for Federal employees. Copies of the proposed forms were made available to the attendees for comment directly to the Chief, CSC Reports and Forms Management Office, BPMIS; comments should be provided by January 13, 1978.

Mr. Edward Grysavage, BPMIS Office of Advisory Services, then discussed the status of CSC Privacy Act issuances:

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Regulations

Parts 293 & 297, as (draft) revised regulations were sent to the agencies for comment via the IAG on July 5, 1977. Those comments were incorporated, as appropriate, and an effort is being made to simplify and revise them.

System notices

Notices have been extensively revised. As planned, there will be three types:

- 1) Internal -- records about CSC employees only.
- 2) Centralized coverage may be Government-wide, but records are maintained by CSC centrally - e.g., Executive Inventory System, Appeals and Complaint Records.
- 3) Government-wide -- required by CSC and maintained on a decentralized basis, e.g., OPF's and EEO Complaint files.

Notices will be coordinated internally within CSC in the next several weeks, then sent to agencies via the main IAG for comment. The revised regulations will be sent also, so agencies will have a full package in front of them during the comment period. After revisions based on comments received, the regulations and notices will be published in the Federal Register for public comment.

FPM Chapter 297

A draft FPM Chapter 297 on Privacy in Personnel Records has been prepared. Based on revisions made to the Part 293 and 297 regulations, this draft will be updated, sent to agencies for comment, and published subsequent to the regulations and notices.

Mr. William Lynch, BPMIS Office of Advisory Services, discussed a proposal to use the Julian Calendar when computing a Service Computation Date (SCD) for leave accrual and reduction-in-force purposes. The proposal was sent in draft form for comment to all Committee members last year. If adopted, the proposal would have provided an employee at least as much creditable service as the old method, and in many cases, credit for additional service. However, agency and CSC comments revealed some reservations about the Julian Calendar and the legality of its use under section 8332 and 6305 of Title 5 of the U.S. Code. An advisory opinion on this issue was requested from the Commission's General Counsel. That opinion, recently received, indicated that the precise language of the statute regarding the use of 12 equal 30 day months when computing the SCD for retirement precluded the planned use of the Julian Calendar. Therefore, action on adopting this method

has been suspended pending study of the possibility of requesting new legislation. Apparently, some agencies have been using the Julian Calendar to compute the SCD for leave and reduction-in-force purposes, believing that the draft proposal indicated that it was permissible to do so. This was not the case and agencies should resume using the method currently prescribed in FPM Supplement 296-31. The Chair requested members to provide any formal comments on experience with and relative desirability of moving to the Julian Calendar approach. Members were also cautioned again not to take action on draft proposals sent to Committee members for comment.

Dr. Schneider briefly added that a proposed revision to the SF-50, **"Notification of Personnel Action,"** which was sent to the members for comment last Spring, is under study for a somewhat wider scope of revision which was indicated by agency comments. Another draft of the revision will be provided to the members for review and comment.

Mr. Ronnie Byers, Chief of the CSC Workforce Surveys and Information Section, discussed proposed revisions to the SF 113-A, "Monthly Report of Federal Civilian Employment," which have been prepared by the Subcommittee on Workforce Statistics. It was noted that a letter was sent on November 30, 1977, to the Office of Management and Budget providing analyses of the impact that would result from changes proposed for the SF 113-A. Proposed revisions to the SF 113-A form do not result in any change from the present position basis of ceiling control. (The President recently decided to explore the development of a full-time equivalency accounting system, and a test is now being undertaken with selected agencies by OMB and CSC). A draft workguide containing instructions for preparing the SF 113-A will be distributed within a week to Committee members for their review and comment. A tentative schedule for implementing the revised 113-A was noted as follows:

- (1) Bulletin containing 113-A form and instructions will be distributed in March or April 1978 (after OMB Circular A-40 clearance).
- (2) implementation of revised SF-113-A is currently targeted for the October 1978 report, due November 15, 1978.

Ben Collins, CSC Systems Control Section, next briefed the membership on the upcoming pilot test for revision of the CPDF Minority Group Designator (MGD) code and collection procedures to meet the requirements of OMB Circular A-46. He laid out the major tasks and timeframe of the effort including development of the MGD definitions and code structure, development of preliminary data collection procedures, development of the pilot test plan, coordination of the procedures and plan with the Committee (including solicitation of test

agency participants), preparation for the pilot test, conduct of the test itself, evaluation of test results, and preparation for implementation of the new codes and procedures. There was a question from the membership concerning potential non-response rates on any self-identified MGD code. The Chair responded by indicating that a similar concern for self-identified handicap code did not materialize and that the response rates for the handicap code have been excellent. The BPME 1% Accuracy Sample will be used as a vehicle for assessing the accuracy of these responses.

Ron Trueworthy, CSC Systems Control Section, described the new CPDF input editing procedures which were distributed to members of the Committee with the agenda for the meeting and to CPDF Submitting office contacts. The new documentation is primarily a reformatting designed to increase clarity. Amendment Sheet 1 containing October 1977 figures and other minor changes is planned for distribution soon. Mr. Trueworthy solicited suggestions for improving the CPDF edits, and noted that the information in the package would be included in a new FPM Supplement (296-32) which will consolidate all existing instructions on CPDF and contain some significant new material on error correction procedures. He emphasized that the purpose of both the new edit documentation and the new FPM Supplement is to improve CPDF documentation for agencies, rather than change anything relative to systems operation. The draft supplement will be provided to Committee members for comment prior to issuance. In response to a question, the Chair noted that edits for related CPDF subsystems (such as the Training File) will be included in this Supplement. The chair also strongly encouraged agencies to incorporate these edits in their own automated systems.

Gerry Hayes, CPDF Systems Manager, discussed the CPDF update schedule, the CSC request for agency submission test data prior to implementation of major systems changes, and the consideration of adopting automated error correction procedures. With regard to the first of these issues, he provided some initial detail on the current ten-day CPDF processing cycle. He then stressed the need for file currency in order to make CPDF as effective as possible for surveys, workforce statistics, reports to OMB, Congress, Labor, etc., and for agency feedback purposes and current achievement of a 60 day difference between "as of date" and CPDF. In response to a question, the Chair noted that it is BPMS practice to provide agency Directors of Personnel with copies of any stand-alone reports on their agency which are generated from CPDF for any Central Management Agency. Mr. Hayes referred to the established processing schedule to show the relationship between receipt of input and final cycle completion, and pointed out the necessity of receiving agency input in a timely manner in order to maintain

the 60 day cycle and provide feedback reports such as error listings, useable record report, and overview report, to agencies within 90 days. He requested that Committee representatives insure that the appropriate parties in their respective agencies are aware of the CSC data input deadlines. The range of CPDF quality assurance reports routinely provided to agency submitters to CPDF was also described.

Mr. Hayes also discussed a handout memo and briefly reiterated its contents, namely that he has discovered in recent months a number of "system" type errors in input received from agencies that had just completed or were in the process of making various types of systems modifications to their automated personnel systems. These errors, he indicated, find their way back to the agency after CPDF has been updated and, depending on their nature, could affect every record in the file for that agency. This would not only result in an unnecessarily voluminous error listing, but more importantly leads to a significant degradation of file quality for the many CPDF information users. These types of errors are avoidable through adequate testing prior to the submission of data to CPDF, he noted, and in fact such testing is employed when an agency converts from manual to automated data submissions. He requested agency cooperation in letting him know whenever internal systems changes or modifications have taken place, so that he can coordinate a test of their submissions through CPDF before actually using the data in a live update.

Mr. Hayes added a brief explanation of the proposed automated error correction concept, beginning with a statement of the problem leading to this proposal. While ideally all errors which are detected during the CPDF update process are sent back to the agencies to be corrected, such corrections do not always seem to occur in a timely fashion. He indicated that this is more than likely due to the manual hard copy error list format, the sheer volume of errors, and internal agency and system peculiarities, but that if the errors are never corrected the possibilities for steady file deterioration become substantial. He further indicated that although many errors are eventually corrected in CPDF through independent agency correction procedures, and that the CSC has other corrective means such as reconciliations and total file resubmissions, these are not procedures which we want to follow with every agency every month. He is now looking into the feasibility of automating CPDF error correction. In order for an agency to use a CSC error tape for automated correction, it would have to interpret the various error codes and error records present for each transaction and determine the appropriate corrective action. There are approximately 150 types of errors and information messages which can be generated, and the corrective action, if any, varies with the type of transaction submitted. Based on a recent meeting with a few agencies to explore the feasibility of adopting CSC error tapes to agency systems, some of these agencies are looking into the possibilities at this time. We now have available the record format of the error file, and the error code transactions, and interested agencies may contact the CPDF Systems Manager for copies. Suggestions are welcomed for ways of modifying the existing error file and records to facilitate automated error corrections.

Bob Huley, CSC System Control Section, spoke on the recently adopted special/saved pay update process. He indicated that since CPDF establishment, the Commission has automatically adjusted salaries of selected white collar pay plans for Government-wide increases, thereby relieving the agencies and the CPDF of processing in excess of 1.5 million transactions, and at the same time ensuring the CPDF salaries properly match the grade and step in the records. He indicated that the update is actually accomplished twice a year, and that in the past the automatic update could be accomplished only for regular rates. This necessitated salary adjustments to be submitted on employees in non-regular pay rates (i.e., saved and special rates). He then explained the new procedures beginning with the March 1976 mass salary update, which update records with saved and special rates for GS, GG, and GW pay plans wherever possible. He provided detail on the actual process, including the comparisons of salary with step, the salary calculations, the look-up tables developed to cover occupations, locations, and grades for which special pay was authorized, and criteria for records qualifying for special pay. Mr. Huley closed by indicating that although the process will also be included as part of the October mass salary update, it is not intended to replace the agency requirement to submit appropriate update records on non-regular rate employees. He added that where changes are made in the record other than salary (e.g., pay rate changed to regular rate or special rate, or a step of 1 inserted when step was blank), agencies are provided a special error listing to review and correct as necessary.

Jimmie Scott, CSC Quality Assurance Section, provided an updated status on the Quality Assurance Subcommittee established last year, including the reason for its inactivity thus far and its current membership. He also briefed the Committee on the role the Q.A. Subcommittee will play in the ongoing CPDF Redesign effort, and closed with a solicitation for additional membership.

Barry Gorman, CSC System Control Section, then provided a brief preview of the January 25, 1978, Committee meeting which will be devoted to the cost/collection assessment methodology for FPMIS data elements. He indicated that the CSC/Agency team is nearing completion of efforts to document FPMIS user information needs. As this effort winds down, we will begin a second major FPMIS developmental activity concerned with preparation of procedures for agency collection and submission of data to the Commission. The first stage of procedures development, he noted, will consist of a study to learn what the cost and collection implications of the data requirements would be for the agencies, with the study to focus on data source, frequency of events to be recorded, recording media, and other data processing activities that must occur before the manual or automated submission of data to the Commission. Findings from this study will be used to develop alternative means of agency data submission,

including such approaches as the submission of summary reports instead of information on individual data changes, the use of statistical sampling, and other techniques for lessening agency costs. In addition, findings may lead to recommendations to the FPMIS Users Group that user information requirements be modified or omitted altogether from further FPMIS development. He closed by informing members that they would shortly be receiving a notice of the January 25th meeting which will describe the cost collection study in detail and encouraged them to attend. In response to a question, the Chair noted that the Spring 1978 meeting of the Committee would include a discussion of the upcoming CPDF Revision; the scope of this effort is expected to have minimal input on agency submitters.

The Committee Chair then invited comments on the proposed FY 78 objectives for the Committee which were included with the announcement of this meeting. The objectives are adopted without objection. The meeting closed with an alert that meetings of the Committee have been scheduled for January 25, March 9, and June 8, 1978 at 9:30 a.m. each day in Room 1304.